

Bringing It Home: A Gathering of Locally Focused Educators in Wisconsin

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SECTION 1: Introduction

On June 19 - 21, 2014, forty local culture educators from around the state convened at Edgewood College in Madison, Wisconsin to identify the commonalities of their work, to develop a list of assets and obstacles pertinent to implementation of local culture pedagogy, and generate strategies for sustaining their future local culture projects and programming. Acting as the principal facilitator for the three-day program, folklorist Lisa Rathje guided the group through an interactive series of small group discussions and activities into a statement of goals for future work. Folklorist Selina Morales provided the keynote presentation, introducing her agency, the Philadelphia Folklore Project, and its role in the founding and operation of the Folk Arts-Cultural Treasures Charter School (FACTS) based in Philadelphia's Chinatown. Ebony Flowers from UW-Madison's Image Lab directed participants through drawing exercises, introducing them to new ways of thinking and problem solving. *Arts at Large* provided artwork and displays to enliven the meeting room, and lastly, participants made site visits to three locally-focused organizations: the Madison Children's Museum, the American Family Insurance *Dream Bank*, and Badger Rock Middle School, a charter public school in Madison that emphasizes neighborhood involvement, energy independence and gardening as means of increasing student resilience.

With funding from the American Folklore Society and Wisconsin Humanities Council, the Wisconsin Teachers of Local Culture (WTLC) leadership team organized and sponsored the event. Key leaders include master teacher Mark Wagler, Assistant Professor of Art Education at UW-Oshkosh Mary Hoefflerle, Associate Director of the UW-Madison Center for the Study of Upper Midwestern Cultures Ruth Olson, Folk/Traditional Arts Specialist at Wisconsin Arts Board Anne Pryor, and Chippewa Valley Museum Director Susan McLeod. Founded in 2002, WTLC is a network of agencies and educators dedicated to public understanding and recognition of the value of local cultural studies. WTLC offers an interdisciplinary, holistic approach to education, which supports teaching, resource identification, communication and advocacy. Starting in 2006, WTLC began offering the *Here at Home* immersive tour program, which provided educators first-hand experience of the unique intersection of people and place in specific Wisconsin communities. The educators then used their tour experience to inform the development of place-based, inquiry-driven learning opportunities for their own students.

Supported by a 2013-2014 grant from the National Endowment for the Arts, WTLC evolved the immersive tour program into *Bringing It Home: Creating Local Culture Teams*, a year-long professional development opportunity focusing on the creation and implementation of four test projects. With ongoing support from WTLC, teams in Augusta, Hayward, Middleton and Slinger, Wisconsin documented local culture with students, integrated results into classrooms, and introduced community members and local cultural organizations to the *Here at Home* approach. The WTLC leadership team

initially planned to re-convene the *Bringing It Home* teams to provide an opportunity for them to showcase their projects to one another, but realized the convening could also be an excellent venue for wider, statewide discussion about the prospects for local culture in the classroom, especially given the current educational reforms emphasizing high-stakes testing and nationally-derived curricula. So, WTLC decided to invite folklorists, classroom teachers, other educators, and representatives from a wide range of organizations and agencies that focus on local culture to the *Bringing It Home: A Gathering of Locally-Focused Educators* event.

With Lisa Rathje's facilitation expertise, the participants primarily explored the following questions during the event:

1. *What are examples of successful local culture projects and programs right here in Wisconsin?*
2. *Who are we? What commonalities do we share? What are our common purposes and principles?*
3. *What vocabularies do we share, and what vocabulary gets in our way?*
4. *How do you recognize a good partner and build strong partnerships?*
5. *What would be your ideal local culture project? Dream big!*
6. *What structures currently help you achieve your purposes?*
7. *What do you need to continue your work? What road will we travel in the future?*

On the last day of the event, the leadership team and participants framed the essential ideas and key strategies generated during their three days together to promote and sustain local culture work in Wisconsin schools and communities. In the following sections of this document, we focus our discussion primarily on the principles of local culture pedagogy and the ideas addressing WTLC's resource development and leadership structure

SECTION 2: Connections: A Local Culture Framework

Feedback from the educators at our June retreat presents us with the need and opportunity to broaden the concept of "local culture." Five circumstances inform our interpretations of the material generated at the retreat:

- Most of the teachers at the retreat were members of the four WTLC project teams we worked with extensively in the previous year, so we share a good understanding of their local culture projects;
- Other participants at the retreat primarily work outside the classroom in a variety of support organizations and non-formal education settings;
- Recognizing our opportunity to learn from and collaborate with environmental educators in place-based learning, we invited four environmental educators who have interests in cultural learning;
- Instead of the usual role as presenters (of tours, workshops, talks, media), WTLC facilitators attended this retreat primarily as listeners;
- We collected many brief writing samples, both individual and small group responses to prompts, giving us much more input from participants than if we relied only on large group discussions and final evaluations.

While participants spoke eloquently about their own work in community-based cultural learning, and identified similar successes of other Wisconsin educators, they tended to find the terms “local,” “culture,” and “local culture” more problematic than useful. We must reexamine and more fully explain these terms. At the same time, participants want to continue meeting and working together, and want to do so as new or more active members of WTLC. Participants are pragmatic: they want a brief “elevator speech” that describes our collaborative work, and a succinct statement to give to administrators and funders that outlines our approach and describes its efficacy. While notes from our retreat suggest useful revisions of our purpose, principles, and practices, we need to thoroughly integrate this feedback into everything we have learned in our work with educators.



John Muir Middle School, Wausau. The Amazing Wausau Race. This biannual race features teams of 4 seventh-graders as they race around Wausau to 20 destinations and 3 roadblock challenges. The race has the students learning about the history and geography of Wausau.

Culture

Expressed simply, culture is the way people live. Described more elaborately, culture includes languages, arts, expressions, beliefs, behaviors, knowledge, institutions, and artifacts - and the list of categories goes on to include everything that is human except for what is passed on genetically.

The term “culture” is a powerful tool for helping students pay attention to the totality of human learned experience. As students notice patterns of human behavior, they begin to

see relationships among many cultural elements, and with teacher guidance can gradually recognize complicated cultural systems – indeed, every K-12 student needs to achieve such understanding before graduating from high school. The web of human interactions creates a cultural world as engaging, complex, and educationally significant as the natural world.

Local educators must operate from a broad view of culture (vs. limited perspectives that refer only to minorities, for example, or to the “high culture” of symphonies and galleries). Our understanding of culture needs to begin early, emerge from limited experience, and regularly adapt to new information and contexts. And culture is not, as standards sometimes portray it, a minor component of the social studies (the stuff only of anthropology and folklore), compared to a bigger concern with time (history), place (geography), institutions (sociology), government (political science), and commerce and finance (economics). Such a narrow scope for culture makes it harder for students to develop a unified, interdisciplinary worldview.

Context

WTLC teachers in many subjects – art, music, English, world languages, history, geography, sociology, economics, political science, psychology, FACE, environmental education, technology, etc. – can make great use of the concept of culture, since these disciplines include standards for teaching students to see how study of these disciplines connects to their lives and their communities. Local culture is the most common context for seeing these connections. Indeed, “context” is another important concept for teachers. However short a lesson, unit, assignment, or project, it always needs at least a hint of larger contexts, a link or two to the larger totality of human experience. And the power of larger projects is at least partially due to having more time to analyze the broader contexts of the cultural expressions students observe. Context is inherently multidisciplinary, moving beyond single, bounded perspectives. A touch of history and a tad of politics, for example, enrich student appreciation and understanding of public art. WTLC has always brought together teachers at all grade levels, in many disciplines, and in many roles – classroom teachers and also “specials” teachers (art, music, PE, FACE), special education teachers, support teachers (e.g. library and technology), curriculum coordinators and administrators, and a few pre-service, retired, and university teachers. Such collaboration builds a collective multidisciplinary perspective, efficacious for viewing local culture in broad contexts.

Because schooling and learning are also a part of local culture, we do well to constantly expand our understanding of the contexts in which learning take place, and how these places impact the ways we teach and learn. Our retreat this year included urban, rural, public, and charter schoolteachers, and educators who work in non-formal settings such as museums, urban arts center, Native American arts program, folk arts center, and community garden. Freed from testing and other constraints at school, these educators are able to construct rich environments where learners have much more opportunity for hands-on learning.

The critical context for learning local culture is immersive locations where we can observe and interact with a variety of people as they live at home, work, play, meet, worship, create, remember, and engage in other daily actions.



Chippewa Valley Museum, Eau Claire. *History Quest* Exhibit. *History Quest* is designed for a student audience. Through activities focused on food, shelter, and clothing, visitors learn about five real children—Laura Ingalls Wilder, Anton Venski, Gilbert Chapman, John Vodacek, Neng Vang, and Jou Lor—from different time periods and backgrounds.

Local

Local studies are place-based, a matter not only of student connections and identities, but also of access and scale. Local culture is place-based culture, the totality of the ways people live in a place. Because students walk, talk, make friends, play, eat, sleep, study, and work close to home, their world, and that of their families and neighbors, is significantly local. With direct experience of their local worlds, both outside and inside school, students have conceptual access to their studies when they are able to connect concepts to their experiences, or even more profoundly, when they develop their own concepts out of experiences.

The local world is an ideal lab for learning, with an appropriate scale for hands-on inquiry. Local learning is always connected to other places and broader concepts. Global education also needs to be rooted in local experience. In-migrations always stir the local cultural pot, bringing in great variety of cultural beliefs, expressions, and behaviors. Similarly, travel, trade, and media as well as school help educated people know their nearby world as part of the larger world. Local places aren't flat because they curve together with other local places to form a globe. International educational exchanges

are much richer when students are able to share complex understandings of the local worlds they live in.

Connections

The most common words retreat participants used to describe the heart of their work are “people,” “connections,” and “learning.” Obviously they are educators, focused on learning, who understand that culture is all about people. Not immediately obvious is that their use of “connect,” “connections,” and similar interactive and combinatory words (e.g. partnerships, relationships, interdependence, collaboration, community, communication) evoke a profoundly dynamic view of their work that pulls together content, teaching, resources, outcomes, and values. Here’s a sample of what participants have to say about connections.

- ***Connections: Relationships, Participation, and Engagement*** - Participants described young people who become passionately engaged in learning because of their relationships to rich environments and with responsive community members. They wrote about “watching visible curiosity,” talked about keeping “history alive for them” through working with artifacts, and observed, “the kids



Arts@Large, Milwaukee. Hampton School Museum Opening. This 1st grader at Hampton School is a docent at the Hampton School Museum opening. He’s dressed in Harley gear that he made. This is part of the year-long research project, in which students traveled throughout the city to learn about the history and culture of Milwaukee. As part of their studies, he and his class went to the Harley Museum and the Harley Davidson plant where motorcycles are made.

learned what to appreciate about each other.” When asked to identify their ideal local culture project, one chose “kids interviewing elders and experts” and another wrote about “extended, experiential, immersive experience.”

Listening, watching, ethnography, and inquiry (fieldwork connections) are some of the words used to describe what students do in the community; even more important is active participation at all levels. One team reported, “The kids did everything,” and a teacher “saw relationships that were built between student, community, project, and adults in the community.” Another educator wants students to “take ownership of the community.”

- ***Connections: Perspectives and Community*** – When asked to list “local culture successes in Wisconsin,” participants repeatedly referenced tribal schools and other tribal programs that are deeply connected to their local communities. More than any other schools in the state, tribal schools study and serve their local communities. While the cultural curriculum of these schools emerges from a long history of oppression, and from a perspective that challenges mainstream depictions of native cultures, for most schools, and especially in urban communities, the curricular challenge is to include at school the many perspectives in the community. One group suggests a need to “open the school / learning environment” to “different cultures.” “We need to understand each other;” it is important to “see the world through others’ eyes.” The goal is to see the “parts working together.” “I love learning about other peoples’ lives, seeing how they fit into community.” Using “local culture as a tool to break down barriers” can help students “transform the familiar and reveal complexities.” The curriculum is about more than information – “inward and outward connections” help students feel connected to place and each other. To fully understand their communities, students must at once appreciate and respect their community while also “respecting the individual right to ask” questions.
- ***Connections: Partnerships and Communication*** – Whether in school or non-formal settings, the most important resource for local culture projects is collaboration where individuals and teams have a clear mission, roles, and responsibilities (“more than one strong leader”). It’s “hard to bring fruit to bear without a team.” Team members should come from a variety of backgrounds and have diverse perspectives and skill sets. They need to be energetic and committed, problem solvers and risk takers, honest and reliable, flexible and curious, have a sense of humor, and show trust and empathy.

Because “parents are the most natural partners for educators,” teams need “a designated person to reach out to parents.” Critically important is to “be intentional to reach out to non-represented members of a community.” In schools, there needs to be a buy-in from at least some teachers and especially from administrators, even if they are not part of the leadership team for a project. “Not-for-profits and schools should be partners,” even though these partnerships can be hard to form. Partners from different organizations need to have an “equal symbiotic relationship,” where everyone “contributes and gets something in return.” In-group communication among team members and partners is essential, as is dynamic communication out to

the community through a variety of media – these public messages must be clear and cohesive, and effectively “brand” the organizations and projects.

- ***Connections: Student Voice*** – Projects should be “student designed” with “ground-up participation.” Projects need to “start with students and what they see as their culture.” Students need to be seen as co-creators of projects. “The main thrust of my work is finding voice – finding ways for my students (and me, too) to have their voice and perspective heard.” Another educator writes about “letting students take their own paths.”
- ***Connections: Audience*** – In an ideal local culture project, the “community goes ‘Wow!’” because their “understanding of the place is enhanced” as learners present “unexpected layers of knowledge.” When the results of local culture projects are “shared beyond school or classroom, shared with adults,” it creates “more significance,” “raises the stakes,” resulting in a “higher level of engagement.” A participant imagines “true collaboration” with the “whole community there and engaged.” When asked to list “local culture successes in Wisconsin,” participants brainstormed more than a hundred examples, many of which resulted in products for community audiences such as festivals, other public events, exhibits, tours, and digital media.
- ***Connections: Service*** – Local culture projects should be “community driven,” “useful and relevant and not just to the project itself.” These projects have the potential to “bring about change and improve our lives and that of others.” “We are part of a community; we are working to take care of our community.” If we honestly “celebrate while critically reflecting,” we create “room for individual and collective growth and responsive change.” “We have a common commitment to kids” and are “determined to improve the ways they can build the world and solve problems.”

SECTION 3: Leadership

Background

To date, leadership of WTLC has been coordinated by a team of folklife and museum educators who bring institutional support to a formalized partnership. Since the scope of WTLC is statewide, organizations with a mission that is similarly statewide (or at least regional within the state) are the most likely ones to be interested in being a formal institutional partner. The current partnership is between the Chippewa Valley Museum, the Center for the Study of Upper Midwestern Cultures at UW-Madison, and the Wisconsin Arts Board. This partnership was created in 2010 via a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) when the Chippewa Valley Museum replaced the Wisconsin Humanities Council as a managing partner.

Since 2010, WTLC has conducted long-range planning through this partnership model of leadership. Partners’ strengths and capacities lead to fluid division of labor although some specific responsibilities are outlined in the MOU. Unique tasks per partner



Community Engagement: Rain Gardens

Connecting people and land through stewardship



Earth Partnership. Madison. This poster represents our community outreach work with the Catholic Multicultural Center in Madison.

include: CVM writing and managing grants that support WTLC projects and activities; CSUMC managing the listserv and hosting the website; WAB distributing regular mailings via the listserv and contributing to the website. Planning occurs on a need-be basis with decisions made by informal consensus.

Institutional support by the partners has been critical for WTLC's functioning. It allows much of the everyday expense of WTLC management to be covered indirectly (e.g., phone, copies, computers, some travel) and allows WTLC wider access to assets and opportunities that are uniquely available to one of the partners. In the instance of a funding opportunity, for example, the eligible partner becomes the organizational leader on behalf of WTLC, reflecting a dynamic and fluid partnership model.

Shorter-range project management is conducted by the leadership team joined by individual specialists who are leading or involved in the project. Because the partners

and specialists are dispersed across the state, planning meetings typically occur over the phone with a maximum-sized group of 6. Decisions are generally made by informal consensus. The current leadership of WTLC has the capacity to successfully conduct one multi-day professional development event per year and plan/fundraise for the following year's project. These have included two-or-three-day conferences with explorations of the local community included; a five-, eight- or nine-day cultural tour for educators that explored a specific path across Wisconsin or a region within Wisconsin; and year-long training and support for teams of local culture educators. 2015 (should funding requests prove successful), WTLC will offer a field school in local culture design education. Occasionally, WTLC will receive individual requests for assistance or consultation from a WTLC member. These are handled by a member of the leadership team.

Driving Issues

Several upcoming changes will affect this leadership process.

- The June 2014 convening revealed a deep desire for WTLC to serve as an organizational hub in a statewide network of local culture educators. This aligns strongly with WTLC's mission. Two specific suggestions from the convening were "Establish a coordinating committee within WTLC" and "WTLC leadership expands and opens organizationally." The rest of this paper describes how to proceed with that process.
- Several members of the current leadership team are approaching retirement within the next 6 months -5 years. They may or may not remain involved as individuals post-retirement and their organizations may or may not maintain their current level of leadership after their departure.



Oneida Nation Arts Program. Planting Seeds of Knowledge Program. Artist-in-residence Jamie Brace leads a song writing residency at James Madison Middle School in Appleton.

Next Steps

The leadership team that created the convening should identify organizations with a connection to WTLC (meaning that members have participated in WTLC events, or have partnered with WTLC in a project, or have long shared a similar approach to local culture as WTLC such as those listed in the World Café exercise). Additionally, consider organizations mentioned in specific suggestions during the convening, as in those generated through “What successes are right here in Wisconsin? And “Who must be included to achieve our purpose?” exercises. From this list, invitations to join the leadership team should be extended along with clear articulation of what that might entail. In advance of this, WTLC should create a checklist of what such a commitment means, drawing from principles articulated in the “What makes a good partner?” exercise. Following Arts@Large’s model of operation, WTLC might enact a two-stage process in which a small commitment occurs first which, if successfully enacted, is followed by a deeper and more meaningful commitment.

Once the new leadership team is assembled, its planning and organizational efforts should address the following areas. For details on specific goals within any of these areas, see Section 4: Resources.

1. the role of individuals in WTLC’s leadership structure

As practiced so far, leadership is constituted through organizations agreeing to a MOU. Individuals without an organizational affiliation are thereby left out yet might be excellent WTLC leaders. Currently they take a leadership position only on specific projects. The leadership team should discuss and decide whether to keep this structure or amend it.

2. succession planning

Develop a succession plan for how to transition into a post-founder, second generation of leadership. Develop the WTLC leadership structure so that one organization or individual pulling back will not fatally harm the organization. Reassign specific duties via new MOUs.

3. branding/messaging/marketing of WTLC

As noted repeatedly at the convening, WTLC is a hidden asset that should be better known and more accessible.

- A. Develop an outwardly-focused communication plan that will effectively spotlight WTLC as an existing network.

- B. Develop an inwardly-focused communication plan that will share local culture education success stories among members.

4. WTLC networking

Convening attendees desire stronger communication within WTLC between members and the potential to work together on statewide or regional efforts.

5. articulation of key local culture education principles

On behalf of its members, WTLC can articulate local culture principles that explain and justify this work. Keeping the language linked with existing trends and concerns within educational practices is important.

6. planning future WTLC offerings

Participants at the convening were clear that they find tremendous value in the professional development that WTLC now offers. Those offerings (which mix cultural tours with technique training and provide support and time for planning) should remain constant and be expanded by additional types of offerings.

7. understanding WTLC capacity

In order to best prioritize WTLC's work, WTLC needs to conduct an assessment of the organization and its structure to identify its capacity to meet our mission and vision.

SECTION 4: Bringing It Home Gathering - Resources

Participants' responses throughout the gathering, and especially on its concluding day, make clear the types of resources they would like WTLC to provide. That list is extensive, but types of resources fall within a few specific categories: creating professional development opportunities and events; providing vehicles that assist and encourage communication; providing lesson plans and curricular material that educators could use to supplement existing curriculum; providing success stories and descriptions of projects that teachers could use as inspiration and models; providing means to evaluate and assess success; providing materials that help teachers clarify to parents and administrators the importance of including local culture in the curriculum; linking education standards and Student Learning Objectives to local culture curriculum; providing possibilities for mentorship and technical assistance.

WTLC currently considers the idea of "resources" fairly broadly, as the description of the *Here at Home* tours demonstrates: "The basic premise of *Here at Home* is that resources for teaching are all around us—in local environments, landscapes, family stories, artistic expressions, community history and contemporary social issues. Through shared experiences, participants learn to identify and integrate local resources into curricula, develop working connections with their neighbors, and advocate for including local cultures in education.... WTLC explores and shares sustainable models that integrate local culture content into teaching." The "Resources" section in the WTLC web site primarily consists of a list of organizations (and a few past projects) that have a local culture connection or orientation.

The following bullet points elaborate on the suggestions and comments offered by the participants in *Bringing It Home: A Gathering of Locally Focused Educators in Wisconsin*.



Wisconsin Teachers of Local Culture. 2012 Here at Home Cultural Tour. Along the shore of Lake Superior, WTLC teachers use hand-held devices to play “Up River,” a game designed by Mark Wagler and Jim Mathews to explore local culture, history and resources.

- ***Creating Professional Development Opportunities and Events***

Participants praised the current gathering, and asked organizers to continue to create events that bring educators together, to help them find like-minded people and organizations, to share projects and information, to celebrate their work, to connect within their region or within their discipline/teaching situation.

They also suggested professional development opportunities that allow educators to learn new skills and incorporate hands-on work on specific projects so that participants have prepared materials to take back to the classroom; participants also wanted opportunities to observe the work of other educators as possible models to take back to their own classrooms.

Specific suggestions included inviting regional partners to sponsor a tour or host a gathering; one model would showcase regional work followed by a convening allowing

all participants to share their own work and ideas; another idea was developing tours that explore other schools and projects.

- *Providing Vehicles that Assist and Encourage Communication*

Two vehicles already exist that can assist and encourage communication among locally-focused educators: the WTLC listserv and the WTLC web site. Participants at the gathering agreed that WTLC was a likely organization to finesse communication among and within the larger group.

The listserv, which currently has about 380 subscribers, sends out periodic announcements of upcoming events and links to relevant articles. It is a moderated list, and subscribers can send their own announcements to the larger list, once such messages are approved by the moderator, although currently few subscribers take advantage of that function of the listserv. WTLC leadership could work to encourage more participation at a larger scale.

The WTLC web site's current organization (sections titled Home, Teaching, Exploring, Tours, Resources/Archives and About Us) needs re-vamping and re-organization in order to be of more use to its users. Participants at the gathering suggested that the web site offer links to existing projects and web sites via an interactive map; to some extent the current web site does this, but the links are not clearly described or attractively presented, so are underutilized. Using a different platform might make updating the web site easier.

Participants described WTLC as core in actively working with partnerships across the state. Participants suggested expanding communication across the state by working with CESAs on locally focused Student Learning Outcomes and communicating with Curriculum and Instruction directors at schools; expanding the WTLC leadership, perhaps by establishing a coordinating committee within WTLC; and increasing WTLC presence at other conferences (local history, oral history, reading, etc.) as a way to expand WTLC awareness. Others suggested organizing regionally, and carrying out local outreach through chapters.

- *Providing Lesson Plans and Curricular Material to Supplement Existing Curriculum*

WTLC's website can host lesson plans and curricular material as resources for locally-focused educators. These materials can both suggest what we see as best practices in teaching local culture, and offer a range of ways to incorporate exercises and content, from simple to more complex. As well as making more apparent (through links and short descriptions) other projects around the state, the web site can also provide more content from past fieldwork and frameworks for thinking about local culture. The web site should offer a pyramid of work samples to help educators plan future classroom activities. The top of the pyramid would offer simple, easy-to-replicate "one-pagers"—brief lessons that help make simple points or provide easy-to-replicate exercises for the students. The next layer would offer "curricular material" such as units or lesson plans

with several steps. The bottom layer would be complex—year-long projects, or projects with multiple partners. Later, we will add work developed during the Field School.

- *Providing Success Stories and Descriptions of Projects for Inspiration and Models*

The web site should also provide "sparks" (inspiring stories collected from past programs and participants). Documenting products and implementation of local culture lesson plans and material on the website can also inspire other educators to adapt and use materials in their own communities (as will the prominently displayed links to projects and groups around the state).

These stories can also be periodically featured on the WTLC listserv, so that subscribers can be regularly reminded of the work going on across the state.

- *Providing Means to Assess and Evaluate Success*

Perhaps this category should be included with "linking education standards and Student Learning Objectives (SLOs)" since the standards and measurable learning objectives are the foundation for being able to evaluate success. WTLC could also periodically offer ways to evaluate success on the listserv (links to resources on conducting focus groups, conducting classroom surveys, action research, and other means to assess success).

- *Providing Materials that Help Teachers Clarify to Parents and Administrators the Importance of Including Local Culture in the Curriculum*

WTLC should develop a "presentation kit" that could be used to inform and persuade stakeholders of the value and purpose for including local culture in the curriculum. This presentation kit could include several elements: a brief Powerpoint presentation (possibly with embedded video clips) with accompanying notes; an attractive flyer directed toward parents and community members explaining how local culture studies benefit the community; a flyer for administrators that addresses issues specific to educational outcomes and benefits; a flyer or tool that offers a quick summary of successful local culture projects, to help administrators and community members visualize what a successful project looks like.

WTLC also needs to develop a short purpose statement (the elevator speech) that will help educators efficiently convey the value of local culture studies to administrators and community members.

Other resources that WTLC should be prepared to develop to help educators convey the value of local culture studies: a list and definitions of some key terms, with examples of how locally-focused educators tend to apply those terms; a set of goals or discussion points (frequently asked questions?) that can reveal the possibilities of skills development and community building that local culture study offers.

Perhaps most importantly, WTLC needs to develop a training program that results in deputized members of WTLC who feel comfortable speaking for the organization, and explaining its role in promoting and sustaining local culture study, as well as explaining its value to stakeholders.

Face-to-face training would then be supported by the printed and online materials described above.



Northern Watersagon Environmental School, Hayward. Namek River Clean-up

- *Linking Education Standards and SLOs to Local Culture Curriculum*

This basic step (which WTLC already does to some extent) makes adopting local culture studies a little easier for teachers, since it provides basic information they need to be accountable for to their administrators and their schools. This information can also serve as part of the argument of the value of local culture studies, for administrators and others who want to be sure the educational experience is foundational and measurable.

- *Providing Possibilities for Mentorship and Technical Assistance*

WTLC leadership currently offers mentoring (through modeling techniques such as interviewing and project planning) and technical assistance through phone calls and visits and through project participation. Expanded leadership could help increase mentoring to more individuals and schools.

SECTION 5: Conclusion

The June 2014 *Bringing It Home: A Gathering of Locally Focused Educators in Wisconsin* allowed a dynamic exchange of past, present and future methods and ideas for the strengthening of local culture studies in the state. Participants identified strong needs and desires for more engaged learning, critical building of an educational community, and using networks to better and more deeply facilitate learning processes. They shared many illustrations of success stories and moments of learning. WTLC will move forward with renewed energy and sharpened mission to build on this momentum.